

THE HISTORICAL TRAIL 1976



REV. MAJOR THOMAS WARE
1758 - 1842

Methodist Circuit Rider,
member of the Christmas Conference, 1784.

The Historical Trail

Yearbook of the Historical Society of the
Southern New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write the Foreword for this Bicentennial Issue of *The Historical Trail*. We planned this with great care and believe we have an issue you will want to keep. The Bicentennial is a time for much reflection on the past. As United Methodists we are interested in our heritage of faith. May these articles help you appreciate more fully the roots from which our Church has sprung.

We are indebted to our authors. Lloyd Griscom, Hillman Coffee and Elwood Perkins are all previous contributors to our Yearbook. We welcome Miss Emily Johnson who has written her first article. Our commendation goes to Dr. Coffee for his fine work as Editor.

There is much celebrating inspired by America's Bicentennial. Many questions are being raised about our failures, many hopes concerning our Country's future. Where does the Church fit in, in all of this? Dare we believe the part the Church has to play is a fundamental part? Dare we not believe that it is?

II Chronicles 7:14 tells us, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

I believe this is God's challenge to all of us in this Bicentennial year. May God bless you. May He bless our Church. May He bless America.

Robert B. Steelman
President

THE METHODIST CHURCH AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (THE RISE OF METHODISM IN AMERICA)

The rise of Methodism in America was modestly under way — not as a Church, but as a set of Methodist Societies — when the trend toward revolution led to the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Ten years earlier, individual Methodists were organizing meetings in Maryland and New York. By 1768 the Methodist tide was beginning to be noticed in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Its early organizers were few — Philip Embury, Barbara Heck, Robert Strawbridge, and Captain Thomas Webb — and all of them were immigrants from England or Ireland.

They were joined in 1769 by such redoubtable Methodist missionaries as John King, Richard Boardman, and Joseph Pilmoor, who came ashore at Philadelphia to carry their message across the Middle Colonies and into the South.

In 1770 their work was augmented by other newcomers from England, and by local preachers rising from the American-born ranks. Already sizeable progress could be reported in New Jersey, where Societies were formed at Burlington, Trenton, and New Mills. In that year also an Irish Methodist, John Early, organized meetings at his home near Clayton, New Jersey; and a nearby Methodist Class took possession of a former German Reformed Church building: St. George's in Philadelphia.

In 1771 the redoubtable Methodist of them all, Francis Asbury, arrived in Philadelphia. His tireless travels and genius for organization brought the loosely-knit Societies together in an early and historic Conference at Philadelphia in 1773. Asbury had the benefit of a letter from John Wesley naming him "to act as assistant in America," and the Conference of 1773 had benefit of reported membership in the various Societies totaling 1,160 (Maryland 500, Virginia 100, Pennsylvania 180, New York 180, and New Jersey 200).

One year later, in 1774, a similar Conference brought reports of a near-doubling of membership, to a total of 2,073.

The Methodist activities in America, as in England, were looked upon generally as oddities cropping up in the free-thinking wing of the Church of England — for Methodists were nominally members of the "Established Church," looking to it for the sacraments. Within the fold of the English Church the pre-revolutionary Methodists were considered to be unorthodox sheep, black sheep even, but not absolutely straying ones.

All of this changed with the onset of war in the American Colonies. Riding across New Jersey in 1775, Asbury noted the turmoil of opinion leading toward an inevitable clash. When the diversity of viewpoint turned to conflict of arms a year later, the Church of England in New Jersey virtually closed its doors. The clergy of that Church, almost without exception, turned to the protection of the British Army or returned to England — leaving the Anglican flock in America shorn largely of its shepherds.

For Methodism the situation was serious enough. Its principal organizers, English-born, declined to take the "test oath" obliging them to support the American revolution; and their ministry became ineffective amidst the overwhelming tide of anti-British sentiment. John Wesley's "A Calm Address to the American Colonies" had no calming effect.

Several of the Methodist missionaries returned to England. Nevertheless Methodism continued to grow, even in the midst of a devastating war, and its continued growth may be attributed to the increasing role of the American-born lay preachers — such men in New Jersey as Benjamin Abbott, Thomas Ware, and Joseph Toy — and perhaps most importantly to the decision by Francis Asbury to remain in America.

Asbury, forced to retire from the center of conflict to seclusion in Delaware, continued in an underground role as the leader of the itinerant American Methodist preachers — who continued to ride the frontier trails, their preaching being "attended with uncommon influence."

With the cessation of hostilities in 1782 the influence of the lay preachers became very evident, as did the strength of their much-admired mentor Francis Asbury. The membership in Methodist Societies had risen four-fold over the course of the conflict.

The Church of England, virtually defunct under that name for understandable reasons, was ultimately to consider reorganization under the title Protestant Episcopal Church; and meanwhile its members including Methodist communicants had in many instances known no benefit of ordained clergy or sacraments over a period of years. With the increasing numbers in Methodist Societies came renewed demands that the Methodist lay preachers be authorized to administer the sacraments — freedom in ecclesiastical matters being synonymous in American eyes with freedom in affairs of State.

John Wesley, a presbyter of the Church of England but reluctant to assume episcopal functions, bowed to the American demands in the year 1784. In September of that year Dr. Thomas Coke sailed to America carrying a consecration certificate from Wesley authorizing him to act as superintendent "of those people in America desiring to continue under my care" and to consecrate Francis Asbury "as associate superintendent," that the two of them "might have authority to ordain elders to administer the Sacraments for the Methodists in America."

This had the historic effect of creating, at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in December, 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church. The new Church was declared to be independent of England, but the founders in America deferred to John Wesley in matters of church practice.

John Wesley for his part prepared a liturgy for his Methodists differing little from that of the Church of England, advising all traveling preachers to use the Book of Common Prayer on the Lord's Day, reading the litany on Wednesdays and Fridays and praying extempore on other occasions. The custom of wearing gowns and bands was also introduced, and accepted for a time.

Before many years, however, opposition to such customs developed among American preachers as well as members. The prayer book was laid aside and the gowns and bands were largely given up in favor of a simplified form of service. Remaining as a powerful factor in Methodist growth were the hymns of Mr. Wesley's brother, Charles Wesley. By the year of Washington's inauguration, 1789, the number of members of Methodist churches in the U.S. had increased to 43,265.

Superfluity of apparel was rigidly banned: "Let no person who is not a member be admitted without a Sacrament ticket. . . . and give no tickets to any that wear high heads, enormous bonnets, ruffles, or rings."

The Love Feast, adopted by Wesley after his association with the Moravians, was at times virtually integrated with the observance of the Lord's Supper; and in any event the same requirement for an entrance ticket prevailed. Early Methodist history tells of a Love Feast held in a barn and interrupted by would-be gate crashers, "one young man finally forcing his way through a hole at one end of the barn," only to be "put out through the same hole he came in!"

By the time of Bishop Asbury's death in 1816 Methodism was counting its numbers in the hundreds of thousands, and was striking toward the top in denominational statistics. The Church was a late-comer. Preceded by Anglicans, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and others, its emergence was singular and truly American — for it was out of the travail of the American Revolution that the Methodist Church was born.

(by Lloyd E. Griscom)

CAPTAIN THOMAS WEBB

(Founder of Methodism in New Jersey)

No account of Methodist origins in New Jersey would be complete without emphasizing the role played by Captain Thomas Webb. Yet, in an American Bicentennial publication that seeks to show the role of the true church patriot in our Country's formative years, it may seem very strange to write about Captain Webb. American patriot he was not. A loyal British subject he was. But he was primarily a Methodist zealot whose chief interest was to advance the cause of Christ. Rightly does he deserve the accolade, number one layman in early American Methodism.

It is not easy to write about Webb. Sources of information are meager, fragmentary, at times unsupportable by actual source material. This writer found it frustrating not to find more documentary evidence of his role in New Jersey. I am largely in debt to three recent studies of Webb: (1) an article by Dr. Frank Baker published in *Religion and Life*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 3, Summer, 1965 entitled, "Captain Thomas Webb, Pioneer of American Methodism." (2) E. Ralph Bates, "Captain Thomas Webb," published last year by the British Section of the World Methodist Historical Society. (3) "Thomas Webb, A Founder of

American Methodism," by Arthur Bruce Moss, also published in 1975 by the New York Conference Commission on Archives and History.

1. Early Life and Military Career

The Captain himself states that he was born May 31, 1725. About his early life or family background we know next to nothing. Bates suggests, purely on circumstantial evidence that he may have been born in Bristol of a lower middle class family. He was well enough educated to be able to use Latin and Greek.

About the age of 19 or 20 he enlisted in the 48th Regiment of Foot. October 29, 1754, the 29 year old Webb was commissioned Quartermaster.

The French and Indian War was now on and Webb's regiment was sent to America. Their first taste of battle came in July, 1755 under General Braddock when the British were soundly defeated in their attempt to take Fort Duquesne. In November he received a promotion to Lieutenant.

Three years later he was slightly wounded in an attack on Fort Louis-berg at the tip of Cape Briton Island.

A year later in the summer of 1759, Webb was with General Wolfe's army heading for Quebec. At the Battle of Montmorency he was severely wounded. A musket ball hit the socket of his right eye, was diverted through the eyeball, passed through his palate into his mouth, and then was swallowed. His only recollection was a flash of light as his eye was destroyed. When the wounded were being carried from a boat away from the scene of battle one of the soldiers looked at Webb and said, "He needs no help; he is dead enough." His senses returned long enough to mutter, "No, I am not dead." In three months he recovered, though wearing a green eye patch that was to be his trademark the rest of his life.

Further military duty finds him in Canada, Boston and New York. In 1760 the bachelor soldier married Mary Arding of a fairly well-to-do family from Jamaica, Long Island. They had one son Charles.

Webb was also a soldier-author. In 1759 he published a book, "A Military Treatise on the Appointments of the Army." It was this book which General Washington used in 1774 when he wanted a treatise on military discipline. Washington's copy is now in the Boston Athenaeum.

In 1764 his regiment was recalled to Ireland. Out of deference to his wife he resigned his Commission even though just recommended for rank of Captain. In retirement he received a Lieutenant's half pay and out of courtesy was called Captain Webb. He soon received an appointment as Barrack Master at Albany, New York. A new phase of his life was about to begin.

2. Conversion And Role as American Methodism's Number 1 Layman

Apparently Webb's wife died about this time for we soon find him back in Bristol, England a troubled man. It was on Passion Sunday, March 24, 1765, that he was converted. While listening to a Moravian minister named Cary preach on the sufferings of Christ, he experienced a vision of the Savior bearing his sins on the cross. His life was changed. He met some Methodists and determined to

live and die with them. It wasn't long before he began publically to tell the story of his conversion and his preaching work began.

By 1766 Captain Webb is back in Albany. Indications are he preached to the soldiers there, held family prayers in his home and perhaps preached as far as Schenectady some 16 miles from Albany.

He also frequently visited Long Island to be near his son who was living with his wife's people. On one such New York visit early in 1767 he joined the newly organized Methodist Society for worship. Appearing in his regimentals, bright green eye patch and dangling sword the Methodists did not know what to make of him. But they soon learned he was one of them and invited him to preach. The sight of this army man preaching in his uniform, sword across the pulpit soon attracted the crowds.

It is beyond the purpose of this paper to discuss details of what he accomplished for the Methodists in New York. Suffice it to say that his preaching brought crowds, won converts and soon led to the building of Wesley Chapel, now John Street Church. Webb's contribution of 30 pounds for the building of Wesley Chapel headed the subscription list.

The Captain also preached often at James Harper's in Newton, Long Island and started Methodism there. James Harper's four grandsons, all prominent Methodists in their day, founded Harper Brothers publishing house.

1767 also found Webb in Philadelphia where he organized a Class of Whitefield's followers into a Methodist Society. He was there to welcome Wesley's first appointed preachers to America, Boardman and Pilmore, and assisted greatly in the purchase of Old St. George's Church.

Webb's work was not confined to the two cities either. By this time he had already preached in New Jersey and in Wilmington and New Castle, Delaware. Later he would be in Maryland.

The Captain knew that if the Methodists were to prosper in America they would need more preachers. So in 1772 he returned to England determined to get more help from John Wesley. It was not easy to find good men whom Wesley could spare for America and Webb stayed in England nearly a year.

He preached often and appealed strongly for help for the Colonies. He also remarried. February 12, 1773, Captain Thomas Webb, age 47 and Miss Grace Gilbert were married by the Rev. John Fletcher of Madeley. His wife's brother, Nathaniel Gilbert was the pioneer Methodist of Antigua. Grace bore Thomas two children, a son Gilbert and a daughter Mary.

Webb obtained the preachers he sought. On Good Friday, April 9, 1773 the Webbs sailed from Bristol with Thomas Rankin and George Shadford whose fares they paid. Joseph Yerbury also accompanied them. June 3, 1773 they arrived in Philadelphia.

3. Webb in New Jersey

Burlington, Pemberton and Trenton are the three places in New Jersey most intimately associated with Captain Webb. There are other places though where Webb apparently had a continuing influence. If the Captain ever had a place in America which he could truly call home, it was certainly New Jersey.

Upon his return to America in 1773, Thomas moved with his bride Grace, into a rented home "on the Green Bank" at Burlington. The "Green Bank" was a high spot along the Delaware River around which they were favored by having such Quaker neighbors as the Morrises, Dillwyns and Benezets.

In 1776 the Webbs moved to the more rural area of Pemberton. Perhaps the War had something to do with the move. Rankin frequently stayed with the Webbs, sometimes for necessarily long periods and they travelled often together.

Earlier than this he had spent some time in Trenton. Gout, which was a periodic problem, confined him in New Jersey's capitol during much of the winter of 1771, 1772. Yet, he wrote, "Thank God. . . I have been able to preach in my lodgings. I have large congregations and sinners are convinced and turn from the error of their ways."

Methodism in all three of the above places dates its origin to the work of Captain Webb in the late 1760's and early 1770's. It appears he had preached in each place by at least 1769. Here is not the place to enter into the question of which Class was organized first. Suffice it to say that Methodist origins in Burlington, Pemberton and Trenton all date from the early influence of Captain Webb, whom one might call the father of New Jersey Methodism.

Other United Methodist Churches in this State which trace their roots back to Webb are in such widely separated places as Pennington, Manahawkin and Newport. No definite proof can be pointed to in verifying this fact, but strong tradition coupled with much circumstantial evidence makes it a plausible conclusion.

His homes in Burlington and Pemberton were frequently visited by Methodist preachers. While William Duke supplied the Trenton Circuit the later half of 1775 he often visited Webb who helped him learn Latin and Greek. He gave Duke his Greek New Testament.

From his home in Jersey the venerable Captain went forth to preach Christ's gospel from New York to Baltimore. When a vacancy occurred on the Trenton Circuit in the spring of 1776, Rankin appointed Webb to fill the appointment. He promised to do it "in the best manner he could."

The Trenton Circuit at that time included such preaching places as: Burlington, Trenton, Mt. Holly, New Mills (Pemberton), Black Horse, Bordentown, Hopewell and Pennington.

Every indication we have during the years he lived in New Jersey is that he preached often, near home and further away. He was a real itinerant at heart. And his home was always open to the Methodist Circuit Rider.

4. A British Subject Returns Home

War is always difficult. Few things about it are compatible with Christian teaching. The Revolution brought forth many divided loyalties. Asbury, alone among the Methodist preachers sent from England, remained during the War.

Webb loved America and its people. He loved his Country in whose service he fought. He loved the Methodist people in America. These were loyalties that could not be reconciled. And, to add to his difficulties, as a former

British Officer and even as a Methodist, Colonists suspicioned his loyalty. Probably they were right.

At any rate the Webbs moved, sometime in the spring of 1777, to Burlington to live with friends. The Captain made a final preaching trip to Baltimore. Arriving back in Burlington he was arrested on the 7th of May. Cleared of some trivial charges he was held on a more serious charge of spying for the British government. On May 26, 1777 he and his family were taken as prisoners to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

In Bethlehem he was befriended by the Moravians including a relative of Peter Boehler. Allowed freedom of movement within a radius of six miles, he preached often to other prisoners and their guards.

Imprisonment lasted some 15 months. Eventually he was permitted to go to New York in a prisoner exchange. The Webbs finally sailed from New York on October 18, 1778.

Back in England, financial problems and poor health dogged his steps. Yet many befriended him including John Wesley and his old friend Thomas Rankin. He lived in London for a while, then in Bath and finally in Bristol.

Captain Webb continued to preach and to be as useful in the Methodist work as he could. In 1792 he was instrumental in the building of Portland Chapel in a growing residential area of Bristol.

The venerable Captain saw his last day December 20, 1796. That evening he conducted family prayers, retired to his room, collapsed as he was removing his coat, and passed "without a struggle or groan." December 24th he was laid to rest in a vault under the communion table of Portland Chapel.

Webb's friend Thomas Rankin summed up his life in these fitting words from his Journal.

"Now I am speaking of Captain Webb (as he is now going to his eternal reward) suffer me to pay a small tribute to his memory. In the beginning of that glorious work (which the Lord in mercy had carried on; and hath done since that period to the present time); he was made a lively instrument for the good of many souls, and in a great measure laid the foundation both in New York and elsewhere of that revival of the power of heart felt religion; which has now spread itself over a vast part of North America. He was a man of much private prayer, and loved to retire and converse with God alone. This I well knew, by being at different times, weeks together with him. His gifts were calculated to be of great use in new places; and having the name of an officer of the army, many came to hear him who would not attend the ministry of others. Let my soul be where his is happily landed." (p. 156)

One of the finest tributes to his ability as a preacher is in a remark made by John Adams. Adams heard Webb preach at Old St. George's Church on Sunday, October 23, 1774. He said, "He is one of the most fluent, eloquent men I ever heard. He reaches the Imaginations and touches the Passions very well, and expresses himself with great Propriety."

Sequel

Captain Webb's body was reinterred from its burial place in Portland Chapel to the New Room in Bristol, May 22, 1972. Some confusion existed over which grave was actually his. The confusion was cleared, however, when in one of the suspected graves was found, sealed in a bottle, the Captain's green eye patch. His grave at the New Room is now registered as the 19th Historic Site of United Methodism. He deserves to rank as one of our founders.

by Robert Bevis Steelman

REV. THOMAS WARE

The Rev. Thomas Ware, one of Methodism's earliest stalwarts, was born December 19, 1758 at Greenwich, New Jersey. He was one of eight children of Thomas and Margaret Ware. He was a grandson of the notable Captain Jacob Ware, who was an Englishman by birth and was a captain in the British service under Queen Anne. In warm reflection, Mr. Ware wrote of his grandfather, "I remember him well, as he lived until I was sixteen years old. His personal appearance was fine, and his mind cheerful. The caresses, anecdotes, and lessons of instruction, received from him, are among my earliest recollections. He had high notions of liberty, and was the first man I ever heard eulogize the Indian character. Most people seemed to think the Indians ought to be exterminated."

"When this venerable old man came to spend a few days with us, we were always delighted, and vied with each other in our efforts to please him. His company was interesting on account of the cheerfulness of his spirits, and the stories with which he was always ready to entertain us. He was in the habit, too, of advising my father with respect to the education of his children. On this subject he used to say, the mind must be made strong as well as the body. . . and in view of this, a beginning could not too soon be made to guard children against the fears which vulgar stories about ghosts, etc., were calculated to produce, and to store their minds with correct ideas. My grandfather lived to the great age of more than fivescore years."

Ware's maternal grandfather, whose name was Reed, was a native of Scotland. On his way to this country he was wrecked off the capes of Delaware and nearly lost his life. "He reached the shore by clinging to some fragments of the broken ship, and was found nearly exhausted on the beach by a farmer, named Garrettson." Afterward he married a daughter of his benefactor. Although Thomas never knew his grandfather Reed, who died in middle age, he writes, "my grandmother Reed I knew well. She possessed fine powers of mind, and a happy faculty of communicating her thoughts. Although not very conversant with books, she knew much of the history of the world, and her conversation was always rendered interesting."

Thomas was raised in an atmosphere of piety with both his father and mother living in the fear of the Lord and teaching the admonition to their children. Of his father, he said "he professed to know that God for Christ's sake

had forgiven his sins. . . The whole deportment of my father tended to fix in me a habit of serious reflection on the subject of religion; and his triumphant death made an impression on my mind that time could not obliterate."

While both of Mr. Ware's parents were pious, they did not agree in their views of doctrine. Thomas writes, "My mother was a firm believer in the Presbyterian faith; but my father was not, and refused to join the church unless he could be permitted to think for himself on the subject of divine decrees. He believed, as my mother often told me, in the universality of the atonement; but, in compliance with her wishes, suffered me to learn the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Alas! how many children are injured, and go halting all their days, for want of skillful nursing." This was Mr. Ware's lamenting view of the long dark period of sorrow caused by these Calvinistic prepossessions, which began after his father's death. In the *Memoir of Rev. Thomas Ware*, he says, "It had been usual for my mother, in my father's absence, to pray with her children morning and evening. . . She collected her children, as usual, around her," and attempted to read but could not. "She sat and wept." "Alas! death has made you all orphans, and your mother a disconsolate widow. I am not worthy to fill the place of your excellent father. . . Go, my children, and pray for yourselves. These little ones, (meaning the younger four of the number,) I will take with me into my closet." On hearing these remarks from my bereaved and much afflicted mother, I arose quickly, went out into the field, and wept bitterly."

The gloom which hung over Thomas' mother "was heightened by the doubts she often indulged about her own election, or gracious state, as she would express it. She was harassed with fears, that what she had fondly taken for saving grace, was nothing more than common grace."

Abject dejection was cast over the early life of young Ware by his early instruction in the doctrines of the Calvinistic faith: he says, "a spirit of melancholy seized me, and I became subject to desponding fears. In this state I wandered in lowly places" . . . hoping for the appearance of his father to "tell me if my mother's name and my own were written in the book of life."

"At times I devoted myself to much reading" writes Mr. Ware. "Interesting histories I preferred to any other solid works: but novels took the lead, and I devoured all I could procure." The school-house where he attended burned down, "and the school thereby broken up, I was deprived of the means of regular instruction — there being no other one within my reach. My time was now employed in aiding my mother to cultivate her small farm; and by the assistance she gave me, I improved some in reading." Thomas stayed with his mother about five years after the death of his father, then at sixteen traveled to Salem, a journey of twenty miles, to work for his uncle.

While residing with his uncle, the quarrel between England and America became very threatening. Young Thomas was ardent in his feeling and enlisted on the side of America. He seemed to understand the issues involved. An elderly man asking him what the principles of the revolution were, he replied, "Never to invade the rights of others, nor suffer others to invade mine, at the risk of life. But understand me, sir, I do not mean as a duellist, for no man in his individual capacity has the right of life and death," and I proceeded to explain an invasion

of rights, as consisting in attempts to compel us to believe and act contrary to the dictates of our rational convictions."

"When the struggle commenced, my uncle was on the side of America. But on the declaration of independence, he changed sides. Influenced by the views and feelings I have expressed, I left him, and volunteered as a soldier in the service. In seventy-six, I was one of the nine thousand quartered at Perth Amboy."

"After I had enlisted, one said to me, 'You are an adventurous youth—it is a desperate cut-independence or the halter.' All seemed at first to agree in dispensing with such articles as were taxed, in a way, as they thought to oppress the colonies. But they were not equally united in having recourse to arms in defence of their alleged rights. The chief difficulty seemed to be, a fear that we should not be able to contend with a power which we had been accustomed to consider invincible; and then, to those actively engaged in the conflict, it would probably be death instead of independence. This, I doubt not, led many to take neutral ground. But on such ground circumstances would not long permit them to remain. All who professed to occupy it were represented as disaffected, and constantly pressed on the subject until many became really so and went over to the enemy. Others pleaded conscientious scruples against bearing arms, and were excused on that account, though their property was laid under requisition to support the war. Having now abjured my king, and taken up arms against him I had time to think and reason with myself on the part I had taken in this great national conflict; and some of my reflections I can never forget while memory lasts. The cause I held to be just. On this point I had no misgivings. But whether we should be able to sustain our ground, appeared to me a much more doubtful question. There must be, I was sure, much hard fighting, and many valuable lives sacrificed, to gain the boon of our independence, if we should succeed at last. And what will they gain, thought I, who fall in the struggle? The thanks of their country? No; they will be forgotten. But then the principles for which we were contending, it appeared to me, were worth risking life for. Our example would be followed by others, and tyranny and oppression would be overthrown throughout the world. Still the question recurred, 'Can you meet the martial hosts of the British nation — you, who know little or nothing of the arts of war, and whose officers know not much more than yourselves — with any hope of success?' This was an appalling view of the subject. Yet with the views I entertained of the justness of our cause in the sight of Heaven, I would not doubt, and resolved for one on liberty or death. 'But there is a hereafter,' was

suggested to my mind. True, thought I, but I will do the best I can, and trust in God. And so it was, that as a soldier in the army I was more devout than when at home; and I prayed until a confidence sprang up within me, that I should return to my home and friends in safety, or not be cut off without time to make my peace with God.

After we had lain a short time at Perth Amboy, to make a show of our strength, as was supposed, our general reviewed us in full view of the enemy. As was expected by some, they opened their artillery upon us. Had their fire been directed with skill, many must have been slain. But they shot over us. Although none were injured, yet many were dreadfully frightened, and indignant at the officers for unnecessarily exposing their lives to such imminent hazard. This was indeed a useless exposure of life. To call out nine thousand men in full view of the enemy, and before their cannon, with only a narrow river of sound, not exceeding, I think two hundred yards, between them and us, was an indiscretion sufficient to alarm the soldiers. Still there was occasion enough to exercise us. Having been a lieutenant in a juvenile company, and taken much pride in studying the tactics of the field, I thought our officers blameworthy in neglecting to drill their men, unprepared as they appeared to be for the discharge of their duty. But instead of this, they permitted them to spend their time in running foot-races, wrestling, jumping, etc. By an inadvertent remark on this subject, I came near getting into a serious difficulty. I said our officers undoubtedly depended more upon our heels than our arms, alluding to our being indulged in running and jumping, rather than trained to duty. For this I was reprimanded, and threatened with an arrest.

After being quartered one month at Perth Amboy, Mr. Ware volunteered to reinforce Washington, on Long Island. "They marched with all possible haste to Powles's Hook; but before we arrived, the British had got command of the Hudson River, and we were prevented from crossing over to Long Island."

"After this forced march, the day being very sultry, and having no tent or quarters for the night, except a damp filthy hovel, I was seized with what was called the camp fever. The physician pronounced it a hectic. Whatever it was, it cost me several years of the prime of my life."

Many were now leaving the army and Mr. Ware left with them. His illness prevented him from proceeding very far or even keeping up with his companion. Soon he stopped to spend a few days with a relative, and found the head of the house to be a violent enemy to the revolution. Through the kindness and influence of the man's wife and daughter Thomas remained with them ten days until his health and spirits were much improved. Upon learning that Washington was on the retreat he set out for West Jersey.

After a time word came that the Hessian army was made prisoners. "On hearing this a glow of health reddened my cheek, and I again volunteered for the service" writes Mr. Ware. "After starting for the army, we were met with the cheering intelligence of the brilliant affair at Trenton, and my companions in arms returned home singing for joy. I, however, was destined to remain long among strangers, sick, and nigh unto death. From this time I considered my country safe. . . But, alas! I wore chains infinitely more galling than any ever forged by an earthly tyrant. My soul was in bondage to sin. Civil freedom I thought I understood, and gloried much in it. But the perfect law of liberty, promulgated by Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, I understood not."

About this time, while residing in Mount Holly, he contracted an acquaintance with a young man of likeable and persuasive manners, who was completing the study of navigation. He was expecting to go to sea with his brother-in-law, in a brig that was nearly fitted for the voyage. Young Ware was induced to engage in the same study with the young man. However, unknown to young Ware the brig was designed to carry on a contraband trade with the British and the owners of the ship were enemies of our country. Finally the brig was ready to sail and Mr. Ware was to be ready at a moment's notice. Mr. Ware then writes, "Thus things stood, when a merciful Providence interposed, and prevented my name being enrolled upon the scroll of infamy. Impatient for the hour to arrive. . . I wandered to a neighboring grove", where a stranger passed by singing of the Redeemer and ". . . longings for home".

A Methodist man in the town, suspecting Thomas to be under religious impressions, went to him and informed him that Mr. Pedicord, a most excellent preacher, had come into the place was to preach that evening, and expressed a very earnest wish that he should hear him. Mr. Ware says, "I knew very little of the Methodists. My mother, who was strongly prejudiced against them charged me to refrain from going after them." Through the influence of his Methodist friend, however, he was induced to go, and for the first time, heard the doctrine of a free and present salvation. "His text was taken from the 24th chapter of Luke: . . . Soon was I convinced that all men were redeemed and might be saved. . . When the meeting closed, I hastened to my lodgings, retired to my room, fell upon my knees before God. . ."

"Mr. Pedicord returned again to our village. I hastened to see him, and tell him all that was in my heart. . . He now rejoiced over me as a son — 'an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ.' I felt and knew that I was made free. . . this happy change, so sudden, so great, as hardly left a vestige of my former self."

"Mt. Holly, a pleasant village in the county of Burlington, New Jersey, was the place of my spiritual birth; and, on that account, it has ever been to me the most lovely spot I ever saw, not even excepting Greenwich, the place of my nativity." Thomas was now twenty-one years of age, and his regenerated nature was wholly consecrated to God and His service.

Soon after this experience Mr. Ware joined the Methodist society. Many of the brethren thought that he was called to preach, but Thomas felt that his knowledge was too limited to be any more than a leader and an exhorter. Then Bishop Asbury came to New-Mills, about seven miles from Mount Holly, and

sent for Mr. Ware to come and see him. After considerable discussion and close examination of Thomas' spiritual welfare he was charged to go to the Peninsula and take the Dover circuit. This was now September, 1783.

It has been fifteen years since Boardman and Pillmore had introduced Methodism into this country, and during all these years the ministers had been without ordination, and societies without the Sacraments. In 1784 after the close of the revolution Mr. Wesley resolved without delay to send over Dr. Thomas Coke, and furnished him with forms of ordination for deacons, elders, and superintendents. He appointed Dr. Coke, jointly with Mr. Asbury, to preside over the Methodist family in America, which had now grown to eighty-two itinerant ministers and 14,983 members. "When Dr. Coke arrived in America he first saw Mr. Asbury at Judge Barrett's, (Barrett's Chapel,) in the state of Delaware." They agreed to hold a conference, to meet in Baltimore, December 24, 1784 which has been known in our history as the celebrated "Christmas Conference", where the societies were organized under the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Mr. Ware had been one of some sixty who attended the "Christmas Conference" and in reflection writes, "Nearly fifty years have now elapsed since the Christmas conference; and I have a thousand times looked back to the memorable era with pleasurable emotions. I have often said it was the most solemn convocation I ever saw. . . During the whole time of our being together in the transaction of business of the utmost magnitude, there was not, . . . an unkind word spoken, or an unbrotherly emotion felt. Christian love predominated."

From this Conference Mr. Ware was returned to the Peninsula. After a season of great prosperity he had a sudden and severe attack of illness, leaving him with serious doubts concerning his call to the ministry. At the following Conference he wrote to Bishop Asbury and declined to take an appointment, and returned to his home in Salem, New Jersey. The Bishop, however, appointed him to Salem Circuit with William Phoebus and Robert Sparks.

In 1786 he was appointed to Long Island, and with the aid of local preachers extended his labors across the Sound, and preached at New Rochelle, Peekskill, Bedford, Croton, etc.

The following year at Conference Mr. Ware volunteered with two other young men to go to Holston Country, now called East Tennessee. On the circuit three hundred members were received the first year, societies were formed, and a number of log-chapels erected. Severe suffering was much a part of the itinerant life. Although the winters were shorter and the climate less frigid in East Tennessee than in New Jersey, there were times the cold for a few days would be intense. Often at such times Mr. Ware writes of having to ford rivers and creeks at the risk of life, and lodge in open log-cabins with light bed-clothing. He says, "my path was infested with savage men, the deadly foe of white men. . . , for the native red men," were "incensed at the wrong inflicted upon them by the whites. I narrowly escaped being murdered or taken prisoner."

At the first Holston Conference, in 1788, the road by which all would reach the place of meeting was so infested with hostile Indians that it could not

be traveled except by considerable companies together. While the first arrivals awaited for the Bishop and his party they held a protracted meeting, at which there were a large number of souls converted, among whom Mr. Ware mentions General Russel and lady; "the latter a sister of the illustrious Patrick Henry.

At this Conference Mr. Ware was appointed to the East New River Circuit, located among the mountains. The hardship of severe weather was a formidable part of his experience. God had so blessed what Mr. Ware called his "feeble efforts" that he said, "nothing could deter me from redeeming my pledge."

In the spring of 1789, he accompanied Bishop Asbury into North Carolina, and was appointed to Caswell Circuit. As he set out to his new charge Mr. Ware was nearly penniless. He says, "My coat was nearly through at the elbows, and I had not a whole garment left, and as for boots, I had none." His horse was a very fine steed and had brought him through countless perils and even once had saved his life. Now adding to the serious needs of God's ambassador, the noble animal sickened and died. The man with whom he stayed gave him a horse and the next house where he called was touched by his destitute condition, thereby giving him a note to take to a store in Newbern to give to the clerk. The instructions unknown to Ware were to let him have whatever he needed up to twenty-five dollars, "for which he would never afterward allow me to pay him a single cent. Thus did the Lord provide!"

New River was the site of one of the Quarterly Meetings in 1790 at which time Mr. Ware was appointed Presiding Elder in that district.

In 1791 his appointment took him to Wilmington, Delaware, and 1792 to Staten Island. At the age of thirty-eight, in 1796, he was appointed to the Philadelphia District and resided at Strasburg, where he met Miss Barbary Miller. "A person," he says, "whom I selected above all others as a suitable companion for me; and on the fifteenth of October 1797, we were joined in holy matrimony."

In 1800 he was changed to a District on the Peninsula. The first year was one of the happiest of his life. "My health," he writes "as good, as was also that of my wife and child. . . The candle of the Lord shone brilliantly about my path: and my cup was sometimes full to overflowing." However, his cup of felicity was not unmixed; for about this time he was called to bury his infant son. His position in his Conference on the question of an address to President Adams, approving his administration and promising him support, when it became known made him very popular with one party, but lost his influence with the other. The end result was his removal from the district, and return to the Philadelphia District.

He took charge of the New Jersey District from 1802 to 1806, after which he was stationed two years in the St. George's charge, Philadelphia. Illness once again overtook Mr. Ware and he found it necessary to take a supernumerary relation. During the year, however, his health improved and he was sent to Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

At the General Conference, in 1812, which met in New York he was appointed one of the book agents, and continued to serve the church in this office four years.

Upon the expiration of his term with the book room he was appointed to Long Island, for the second time and found some of the fruits of his former labors still faithful. He continued in the effective work until 1825, and rendered full service as an itinerant for the period of forty-years.

Thomas Ware was the first chartered member of the New Jersey Conference. He entered the Full Connection in 1786, became a supernumerary in 1825 and died in Salem March 11, 1842. His gravesite is in the church yard of Salem: First United Methodist Church.

Mr. Ware concludes his memoir with, "For this life I have little to excite my hope. I cannot expect to be released from putting my feeble powers in requisition to supply my daily wants. I do hope, however, to be sustained, let the remnant of life's current flow as it may. But of future bliss in heaven, I have a strong and well-grounded expectation. Whatever claims I may suppose myself to have upon the justice of my fellow-men, for whose salvation I have ardently laboured, I have none on God, except through him 'who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Through his merits and mercies, I have a well-grounded hope of a glorious immortality beyond this vale of tears."

His final hope for the Methodist Episcopal Church was expressed in the closing statement of his Preface to his book, "Methodism, in its radical principles and prominent features, is the same as when the writer first entered the field. That it may continue so to the end of time, and equal the highest expectations of its early friends and advocates, as an instrument of spreading evangelical holiness through these lands, is the sincere prayer of Thomas Ware." Salem, N.J., March 28, 1839.

Written by
Emily M. Johnson

THE CAPE MAY COMMISSION MEETING IN 1876 AS REPORTED IN A LOCAL NEWSPAPER

It is always interesting and wise to try to find some local news item and reporter's story written at the very time some incident or event takes place. It gives local color and helps the reader to picture in his imagination what has transpired.

We have discovered such a story in the local Cape May paper when it was called, *The Star of the Cape*. The excerpt is captioned "METHODIST CHURCH - NORTH AND SOUTH" and was published August 23, in the Centennial Year of 1876. The paper doubtlessly had quite a circulation, for that very summer thousands of people were in Cape May after visiting the Centennial in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. Cape May itself was a growing rendezvous for Philadelphians. The Sea Grove Hotel at Cape May Point, no longer there, and the Congress Hall, which some time later was destroyed by fire, were very crowded.

Here is the reporter's story.

"METHODIST CHURCH — NORTH & SOUTH"

Excerpt from Cape May Newspaper THE STAR OF THE CAPE

WEDNESDAY

AUGUST 23, 1876

At 1:30 o'clock Monday afternoon the Methodist Church fraternal commissioners, North and South, together with their friends, took carriages from Congress Hall and proceeded to the Sea Grove House at Sea Grove, where they were treated to an excellent dinner. Afterward, they adjourned to the spacious parlor where a number of friends of all denominations had assembled to greet them. Here they spoke and listened to speeches warm from the heart and well calculated to cheer on the good works in which they are engaged. Seldom has it been our lot to witness such perfect harmony of thought and expression, such good humor and affectionate consideration which seemed to animate the words and actions of all present. When the Long Metre Doxology had been sung and while the Benediction was being pronounced by the Rev. Mr. Mitchell we thought we saw tears of joyfulness in several eyes.

The venerable Mr. Whilldin, he who has been the means of making Sea Grove what it is, was unanimously chosen to occupy the chair. The beautiful hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" was sung to the good old tune of Dennis, Mr. W. B. Hayes leading this and his accomplished wife presiding at the organ.

Rev. Mr. Bird then read the seventeenth chapter of John, and was followed by T. A. Fernly, of Philadelphia, who earnestly invoked the divine blessing on the commission, and prayed that they might be inspired in their labors. Mr. Whilldin bade the delegates a hearty welcome to Sea Grove, promising them the prayers of all earnest Christians in their behalf. That it was fitting that they should meet in this place where love, good-will, and kindness abounded, and where the fact that here all Christian sects united in worshipping the true God, might have a salutary effect in showing them the beauty of unity.

Rev. Dr. Grammer, of Baltimore, said that most watering-places were resorts of pleasure; but here we have chances for mental improvement and health, both of body and mind as well; at least we are surrounded by associations which are calculated to produce the above desirable results. The Commission had to balance claims of a conflicting character, but he hoped all would be well.

Judge Fancher, of New York, was glad to be able to come here and enjoy this hospitality — this genuine enjoyment. The time and place of holding this conference both seemed providential; and if a union was effected, a thrill of joy would pervade the whole Methodist church, upon whose dominions the sun never sets.

Dr. Myers said it was unkind to set a man to eating a hearty dinner, and then, immediately after set him to speaking, but no speech that he could make would compensate for that excellent repast. The commissioners were not yet permitted to inform the public what they were doing, but the present surroundings would work wonders. . . Was from Georgia, and thought his northern friends intended to melt the hearts of the Southern people by kindness.

We have been rebels. We don't intend to be so again. We love our country, and thank you for the spontaneous demonstration.

Hon. Benjamin H. Hill, of New Jersey, gave his experience at a meeting similar to this at Toronto, and where they sang the same beautiful hymn as was sung at the opening of these exercises. All he wanted was North and South, East and West to unite, and God would bless us all, "in the sweet bye and bye."

"America" was then sung by those assembled, after which Gen. Vance, of North Carolina, being called in, informed his friends that they were taking advantage of his youth and unsuspecting nature, and then made a most eloquent speech, in which he said, "there was a time when we were estranged and led away. We will not grieve over the past, but will remember this occasion with gratitude. If God willed the war, not a poor boy in it died in vain, as it has welded us together in stronger ties, never to be broken. God's finger lifted the veil of night and let the daylight gently in." His speech was listened to with eager interest, and was frequently applauded.

After the benediction, as referred to above, the party, after visiting the Pavilion, Lake Lily, and other points of interest, returned to Cape May, deeply impressed with the reception at Sea Grove.

The following commissioners represent the Northern Church; Erasmus Q. Fuller, D. D. of Atlanta, Georgia, Editor of the Methodist Advocate; Judge Enoch L. Fancher, LL. D., distinguished Jurist of New York, N.Y.; John P. Newman, D.D., pastor of the Metropolitan Church of Washington, D.C.; Morris D. G. Crawford, D.D., Presiding Elder of the New York Conference; and Gen. Clinton B. Fish, of St. Louis, founder of Fisk University; and the following commissioners from the Southern Church: Professor Edward H. Myers, D.D., of Savannah, Georgia, formerly of the Wesleyan Female College in Macon; B. K. Hargrove of Nashville, Tenn., Gen. Robert B. Vance of Ashville, North Carolina; Thomas M. Finney, D.D., of St. Louis, Missouri; and David Clopton of Montgomery, Alabama.

(Dr. R. K. Hargrove and Dr. John P. Newman later became Bishops.)

Copied by Karl Dickinson, The Historical Museum, Cape May Court House, N.J., at request of Rev. F. Elwood Perkins.

THE CAPE MAY COMMISSION EPISODE
In the 125th Anniversary Pageant of the New Jersey
Annual Conference, "The Singing Years"

Written and Directed by

Ruth Parsons Strahan

and

Presented on September 23, 1961,

at

The Music Pier, Ocean City, N.J.

The history of the New Jersey Conference was dramatically presented at the time of the 125th Anniversary Session of the Conference. The scholarly yet imaginative script from the talented mind of Ruth Parsons Strahan included an episode (no. 11) that effectively portrayed and made come alive again the consultation between the representatives of the M.E. Church, and of the M.E. Church, South, in old Congress Hall, Cape May, on August 17-23, just one hundred years ago. We excerpt and reprint here for your interest this fascinating episode of the pageant.

The Commissioners appointed by the Northern Branch of the Church and the Commissioners appointed by the Southern Branch were impersonated by men from the Haddon Heights Methodist Church and directed by James Barger. Each of the several episodes had been assigned to a selected dramatic group of one of our Conference churches. The five men representing the five commissioners from the South were Carlton G. Johnson, Jr., Homer A. Smith, Rodman B. Hart, J. William Johnson, and John W. Hanna. Representing the North were John Crawford, Jr., Clifford T. N. Harwood, Paul A. Karl, Charles R. Dawalb, Jr., and Gordon R. Heckler.

The choir of the Methodist Church of Ocean City, under the direction of the late George G. Ashton, supplied the musical background at the close of the preceding episode with a medley of camp meeting songs. When the curtain rose again the voice of the Narrator, the late Reverend W. Gordon Lowden, the pastor of the First Methodist Church, Red Bank, was heard.

"While the Methodist Episcopal Church in New Jersey grew, there were great differences of opinion as to administration and policy in the over-all picture of the Methodist Church. In the years to come these disagreements caused the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church.

Slavery became a vital issue and it seemed impossible for the people of North and South to agree on the stand the Church should take. At the General Conference of 1844 great souls and great minds tried to master a great issue and save the Church from division, but division was inevitable and Methodist Episcopal Church South came into being.

Then began years of planning, deliberations, debates, and prayers without ceasing for the union of Methodism."

The second Narrator was the Rev. Leon W. Gibson, then Pastor of the Toms River Church, now of Epworth Church, Palmyra. He was speaking. . . .

"The first hope for success was seen when the Northern General Conference of 1876 authorized the appointment of a Commission of five to meet the similar Commission from the Church South "in order to remove all obstacles to formal fraternity between the two churches!"

As the curtain opened, two conference tables were spot-lighted on stage. The Narrator continued. . . .

"The Bishops of the Church South appointed as its Commissioners, Dr. E. H. Myers of Georgia, Dr. R. K. Hargrove of Tennessee, Dr. Thomas M. Finney of Missouri, the Hon. Truett Pope and the Hon. Robert D. Vance of North Carolina. The Bishops of the North appointed Dr. Morris Crawford, the Hon. Enoch L. Fancher, Dr. Erasmus Q. Fuller, General Clinton B. Fisk, our distinguished New Jersey Conference layman in later years and Dr. John P. Newman."

(During speech, the men enter and take their places around the tables and pantomime discussion.)

NARRATOR 1: "The task facing this group of leaders was a large one, the full consummation of which was hardly to be expected. However, the results achieved were most gratifying to both sides and made a permanent basis for future relationships."

(Commissioners pantomime interjecting ideas, one at head of table writing with pen.)

NARRATOR 2: "The Southern Commissioners formulated a letter to the Northern Commissioners, quoting Dr. Lovick Pierce's statement in his fraternal address to the recent General Conference:

COMMISSIONER: (reads with southern accent) There is but one Episcopal Methodism in the United States, and you and we together make up this Methodism, our two General Conference jurisdictions being each rightfully and historically integral parts of the original Methodist Episcopal Church constituted in 1784. "The first and foremost objective is the official recognition of the Methodist Episcopal Church into a second General Conference jurisdiction, as provided for in 1844 by the last ecumenical General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

NARRATOR 2: "And so the message was delivered to the Northern Commissioners."

(One takes message to person at head of Northern table who rises, shakes hands, puts hand on shoulder in comradely fashion. Southern representative returns to his group. Northerners read and discuss in pantomime.)

NARRATOR 2: "After much discussion, the Northern Commissioners replied in the most conciliatory speech and fraternal spirit, and while not accepting all the positions of the Southern Commissioners, they offered a remarkable and even magnanimous formula which became the basis of the final declaration."

(Lights up on middle of stage to draw groups together.)

(One commissioner rises to center.)

"The first business transacted next day was the adoption of the following declaration and basis of fraternity. . . .

COMMISSIONER: (reads report) "Each of said Churches is a legitimate branch of Episcopal Methodism in the United States, having a common origin in the Methodist Episcopal Church organized in 1784. Since the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church South was consummated in 1845 by the voluntary exercises of the right of the Southern Annual Conferences, ministers and members, to adhere to that communion, it has been an Evangelical Church, reared on Scriptural foundations, and her ministers and members with those of the Methodist Episcopal Church, have constituted one Methodist family, though in distinct ecclesiastical connections."

(Reactions of approval from members. Draw chairs together, discuss.)

NARRATOR 1: The Commission considered a large number of conflicting property claims and made adjustments. Before adjournment it adopted rules for the settlement of claims in the future. Both General Conferences approved the actions of the Commissions and emphatically accepted it as final.

(Member of Commissions shake hands as curtain closes.)

This acceptance, was the answer to thirty years of questions, disputes and conflicts. Its importance, influence and effect cannot be overestimated. It was the golden milestone at the head of the highway that led to unity and union in American Methodism.

(Choir starts softly under this speech, builds up and finishes hymn — "All Praise To Our Redeeming Lord.")

NARRATOR 2: But important though it was, it was only the beginning. Strong, conscientious men of high purpose, far vision, and righteous will kept before the Churches the lively hope that they could and would find their way into an honorable, effective, and substantial union. Those who were responsible for the first step at Cape May did not live to see the Union, but other dedicated men arose to take their places. "God buries His workman, but carries on His work," said John Wesley.

Through the conferences of 1898, 1906, 1910, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1923, 1930 and 1936 many discussions and plans were formulated, presented, only to be voted down again and again. Undaunted, the Methodists of all branches of the church would meet again in their own groups constantly searching for new ways to satisfy their differences. Among the hundreds of men who worked tirelessly towards unification were three who stand out: Bishop John Moore, the Methodist Episcopal Church South Chairman; Bishop Edwin Hughes, Methodist Episcopal Church North Chairman; and Bishop James Straughn of the Methodist Protestant Church Chairman.

NARRATOR 1: These were the men who led the Joint Commissions in the grave responsibility and arduous labors in preparing the prospectus of the

Discipline for the United Church. "It was a year", Bishop Moore said, "that heavily taxed body and spirit to the utmost, by day and by night. Meetings were held during 1938 and early 1939 in which every page of every report was carefully reviewed, revised, and passed upon. By March 15, 1939, the Prospectus of the Discipline of the proposed new church, The Methodist Church, was in the hands of every delegate to the Uniting Conference, which was to meet in Kansas City in April".

(Comment by editor F. Elwood Perkins, "I well remember my father coming home from Kansas City where he attended the Uniting Conference as a visiting layman deeply interested in the spiritual meaning of the Unification Movement. He told us that to him it was a grand, new day. The Uniting Conference itself was a marvel of efficiency and conscientious labor. One of the unforgettable scenes in American Methodist history is that in which Bishops Straughn, Moore, and Hughes joined hands as 14,000 Methodists from all over the country sang together "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.")

JOHN (EARLEY) EARLY

John Early was the first of the pioneer Methodists in New Jersey. He was born in Ireland in the year 1738, and immigrated to this country in 1764, settling in Greenwich Township, Old Gloucester County, in what was known as the "Irish Tenth," an area which comprised the present counties of Gloucester, Camden and Atlantic.

Mr. Charles Earley, a descendent, gives an account that a member of the family, now living in Ireland states that John Early was an aggressive and properous business man, in partnership with a brother in the wood-working trade. John came under the influence of John Wesley during one of Wesley's trips to Ireland. Mr. Early embraced the doctrines of the Wesleyan Church. As a result, he was disowned by his family who feared the brother might also be influenced, persuaded John to go to America.

He purchased acreage along "Still Run Creek" in Greenwich Township. Later he bought a two-thirds interest in a sawmill, and afterwards purchased the remaining one-third. His home as a log cabin, located about one mile Northeast of the present Aura United Methodist Church. Later his home was incorporated in a larger house which burned about 1911.

When the Wesleyan reformation began to spread over New Jersey, it was exceedingly small and feeble. A Methodist in those days, was a rare phenomenon. John Early was one of the first of whom we have any information. Mr. Early, together with the old line Methodist Class Leaders and Preachers, was a fearless and rugged individualist. Methodists were persecuted, misunderstood and frequently considered "Tories." John, however, served his adopted country during the Revolutionary War.

The operation of his sawmill gave him opportunity to meet people from near and far. Apparently he lost no opportunity to expound the doctrines of Methodism. God used his business talents in organizing Classes and Societies throughout Old Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland Counties. When Francis Asbury arrived in 1771, the Societies and Classes were incorporated as churches under the laws of New Jersey.

Rev. Jacob Fisler speaks of going to Quarterly Meetings ten to fifty miles distant, and continued "our practice was to work 'til ten o'clock, take our horses or oxen from the plow, hitch them to the wagon and all hands go to John Early to meeting. At twelve o'clock, turn teams to wagons, let them eat, while we went to hear a good sermon; have a powerful class; then hitch up again and go home rejoicing. On Sundays go to Father Early again. Some week day nights we went to John Early, Samuel Ledden or Joseph Jackson for prayer meeting."

When the Missionary Society of Bethel was organized, March 14, 1824 John Early was the first named manager, together with fourteen others. At the incorporation of Adams Meeting House (the Old Stone Church) near Swedesboro he was one of the first named trustees. His name appears as a leading Trustee for Union Meeting (Aura) and of the Old Friendship Church (near Monroeville). Very likely there are other deeds on which the name of John Early appears as a trustee.

They took their religion seriously, often signing the oath of office before a notary with their own blood.

Prior to the erection of the Union Meeting House, (Aura) built in 1802, Early's was the regular Sunday afternoon preaching place on the Bethel Circuit according to the diary of Rev. Richard Sneath, who served the Bethel Circuit from 1798 to 1799. Extracts from his diary in reference to John Early show the labor and spirit of early Methodism.

Sunday, June 10th, 1798: Preached at Bethel at 10 and had a meeting time, at 3 preached at Earley's and the power was greater than at Bethel — I added 6 to the Society.

Sunday, July 8th, 1798: Preached at Bethel to large congregation. Many of them were happy. At 3 preached at Earley's and had a good time — Joined 2 in class. I lodged this night at J. Fisler.

Sunday, August 5th, 1798: This day I spent at J. Earley's and attended prayer meeting in the evening which was attended with some power.

Sunday, August 12th, 1798: Preached at Bethel to a large congregation — a number of lively happy souls. At 3 preached at Earley's to a large company. This day's labor I trust was blest to many souls.

Saturday, August 31, 1798: Rode in company with Mr. McCloskey to J. Earley's and visited by the way an ancient friend.

Sunday, September 1st, 1798: Heard Mr. McCloskey preach at Earley's. I gave an exhortation — there was much power of

the word there. At 3 he preached at Bethel and I exhorted — an awful shock came upon the people. I hope the seed sown will be as the bread cast on the waters that will be seen after many days.

Friday, December 14th, 1798: Preached at Stiles and had a very happy time. I rode in afternoon to John Earley's and met Mr. McCloskey there.

Sunday, December 16th, 1798: Had a good love feast at the close of which was attended with power in preaching and exhortation. There was great power — I hope it will be as bread cast upon the water that will be gathered of many days. Rode to Br. Earley's where Mr. McCloskey preached with power. I exhorted with power still attending the word, I believe the Devil's Kingdom got a mighty shake.

Sunday, December 30th, 1798: Preached at Bethel and administered the Sacrament and held Love Feast and the Lord blessed the people very much — it was a happy time. In the evening I preached at J. Earley's and had a good time also.

Sunday, January 27th, 1799: Preached at Bethel and had I believe a profitable time. At 3 preached at J. Earley's. At both places there was more out than I expected — the weather being inclement.

Sunday, February 24th, 1799: Preached at Bethel and I trust with profit on the Lord's Prayer. At 3 preached at Earley's and had a time of power.

Sunday, March 24th, 1799: Preached at Bethel at 10 and J. Earley's at 3. This day I have had tolerable liberty and comfort.

Sunday, April 21st, 1799: Attended Bethel, but got Br. Eggbert to preach. At 3 I preached at J. Earley's and had some power in preaching, but some of the young people are growing weak and weary in well doing.

Sunday, May 19th, 1799: Preached at Bethel at 10 and J. Earley's at 3. I had this day some sensible impressions from the thought of parting with this people.

Bishop Francis Asbury recorded in his journal on "Tuesday, April 14, 1807: Rode to Salem, and preached; rode home with Father Early." On the Sabbath, April 9, 1809, he writes: "With difficulty we got out of the city of Philadelphia, and ran some risk in crossing the river into Jersey. I preached at two o'clock at Carpenters Bridge. We lodged with Father Early, twenty-four miles from the City. Here I take a little rest." John Early maintained in his home a room known as "the preacher's room."

Mr. Earley raised a family of six sons and three daughters: William, John, Paul, Hugh, Samuel, Wesley, Hannah, Mary and Rosanna. William Early was born October 17, 1770. He was converted at a revival in the Friendship Church in 1789 at the age of 19. In 1791, at the age of 21 he entered the

ministry and was appointed to the New York Conference. "He bore the cross into the wilds of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick." His mission there was about two years, "during which time he traveled extensively through provinces, encountering great difficulties, performing severe labors, and suffering persecution for Christ's sake. He was arrested and imprisoned, but when released he went on his way rejoicing in God, and preaching to the people the Glorious Gospel of Christ. He traveled in New Brunswick in the winter on foot, bearing his saddle bags upon his back." In 1793 when he left the region his financial resources were so low he could not pay his passage from St. Johns to New York until he sold his saddle bags and a pair of shoes. "Though in his father's house in New Jersey there was 'bread enough and to spare,' yet as a stranger in a strange land, whither he had gone to carry the bread of life to the perishing, in addition to his other trials he was subjected to the stern pressure of absolute poverty."

In 1794 while on the Chester Circuit, William Early married a Miss Hoffman. Later he served circuits in Delaware and Maryland. His labors continued within the bounds of the Philadelphia Conference, part of the time as a located minister, but chiefly in the itinerancy, until his death June 1, 1821. "Several of his brethren occasionally visited him, and generally found him happy in the love of his Saviour. In the full assurance of faith, rejoicing in hope of the glory hereafter to be revealed, he met death in triumph and departed in peace. He was a worthy son of New Jersey Methodism." It is recorded that other members of the John Early family have answered the "call to preach."

Charles Earley, a descendant, records: "Sons and grandsons of John Early migrated to the Philadelphia area, and were affiliated with Old Ebenezer Methodist Church. One grandson, Edward Stokes Early, became an undertaker catering to wealthy families. They were apparently in close touch with the Methodist organization because through the influence of Bishop Matthew Simpson, young Early was placed in charge of the funeral of President Abraham Lincoln. He later officiated at the funerals of Bishop Simpson, President Grant and other prominent people."

January 20, 1828, John Early died at the homestead, near Aura, New Jersey. The *Village Herald and Advertiser* reporting his death stated in part: "He had been an exemplary member of the Methodist Episcopal Church for sixty years." The Christian Advocate account said, "He was a Class Leader and Steward for forty years," and described as "a consistent Christian, a faithful friend, and obliging neighbor, a kind husband, and a fond parent — devoted to the interests and welfare of those whom providence had committed to his care. His long life of fidelity contributed much, doubtless, to the prosperity of the cause of Christ in the region where he lived; and in the history of Methodism in the State, his example appears like a lone star shining in a clear place in the heavens, and shedding its serene effulgence upon the darkness, clouds, and tempest of a dreary and fearful night."

Mr. Early's first wife, Mary, died March 16, 1801, and his second wife Hannah, died April 20, 1828. They are all buried in Bethel Cemetery, Hurffville, New Jersey.

Emily M. Johnson

BICENTENNIAL CHURCHES (PRIOR TO 1783)

HURFVILLE
TRENTON, First
WEST LONG
BRANCH, Old First
ERMA
CROSS KEYS

PEMBERTON
CENTERTON
PENNINGTON
PENNSVILLE
PORT ELIZABETH
FREEHOLD

BURLINGTON, Broad St.
FRIENDSHIP (Salem County)
SALEM, First
MT. HOLLY, First
ADELPHIA

JAMES STERLING

James Sterling was foremost among the most honored and distinguished laymen of his time. He was a principal figure in New Jersey Methodism for nearly half a century.

Sterling was born in Coleraine, Northern Ireland, on January 6, 1742 (some descendants give the date of his birth February 14, 1743), the son of Archibald and Jane (Hunter) Sterling. His family came to America when James was twelve years of age. His training in the business of merchant began with working with his uncle, James Hunter, as a peddler and later he worked for him in a store in Philadelphia.

Although James had had religious training by a godly mother who was a member of the Presbyterian Church, as he grew he fell into company that "imbibed the spirit and adopted the practices of the vain world; thus illustrating the Scripture declaration that 'evil communications corrupt good manners,'" writes the Rev. John Atkinson.

When James was twenty, he felt that he should enter business for himself, and opened a general store in Burlington, New Jersey, remaining however, under the counsel of his uncle. Now he also withdrew from the society of questionable character, and formed acquaintances that would serve him better in business.

He married Mary Shaw, who was an Episcopalian. They agreed to avoid differences of opinion in religion and established the worship of God in their family. Although the form of godliness was maintained, for some time they remained without its power.

In 1771 Mr. Sterling heard Mr. Asbury preach, and was brought under deep conviction of sin. He then became a constant hearer of the Methodist preachers, and soon joined the society. For a considerable time after this, he was connected with both the Methodist and the Presbyterian Churches.

When the Revolutionary struggle began, Sterling held the office of justice of the peace under the royal authority, "but when the government of England declared that the Colonies were no longer under his Majesty's protec-

tion, he very justly concluded that where there was no protection there could be no obligations to allegiance. He then took a decided and active part in the American cause as a firm and zealous whig." Family tradition accords him as entering the service in the New Jersey Militia (1775-77) as a Captain. He immediately fitted out the entire company at his own expense. "He embarked his reputation, his fortune, and his all in the support of the Independence of the United States," according to the *American Daily Advertiser* of Philadelphia.

During the war his religious zeal had faded, and his connection with the Methodist society ceased. He did maintain, however, his attachment to the cause and followers of Christ.

Although his mercantile business had been very prosperous, he abandoned it and purchased a valuable farm in Salem county. He completely furnished it with stock and everything necessary to be a successful farmer and moved in, only to find he was not contented and soon returned to Burlington and again went into the mercantile business. Here he continued the rest of his life.

During the time Mr. Sterling resided in Salem County he renewed his interest in spiritual concerns and became the partaker of a "peace that passeth all understanding." Benjamin Abbott records in his life "On a Saturday night I dreamed that a man came to meeting, and stayed in class, and spoke as I never had heard any one before. Next day James Sterling came to meeting, stayed in class, and spoke much as I had seen in my dream. After meeting I said to my wife, that was the very man I had seen in my dream, and the Lord would add him to his Church. Soon after he was thoroughly awakened and converted to God."



Mr. Sterling endured great conflict in the subduing of his pride. He was a man of position and wealth and the Methodist society at that time was chiefly comprised of people in humble walks of life and generally regarded with disrespect by the polite and refined society of the world.

However, he humbled himself, or rather, was humbled by grace, and became and continued to be a member of the persecuted and reproached society, and the Lord blessed his soul very remarkably, and in such a gracious manner as he had never before experienced, with pardon, and peace, and joy in

the Holy Spirit. He professed and no doubt possessed justifying grace by faith in his Lord and Saviour, the Spirit of grace bearing witness with his spirit, that he was born of God. He became very bold, zealous, and active in the cause of religion; and he frequently spoke in public by way of exhortation, warning his fellow creatures to flee by repentance from the wrath to come, and to fly by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

He yet continued to be a member for some time both of the Presbyterian and the Methodist connections. But about that time some objections were raised by a part of the Presbyterian Church Session to his continuing to be a member of both communities; that if he continued in the Methodist society, and to speak in public by virtue of authority or permission from the Methodists, they objected to his communing with them; and also they objected to some tenets which he held in opinion with the Methodist as true and Scriptural, which some of the Session considered as contrary to their Confession of Faith. The Session, however, was divided on these questions. Some were for his continuing among them as he had done; others were for his not communing with them unless he left the Methodists. He had been recommended to them in terms of high approbation in his certificate from a sister Church, and they had no charge of immorality against him, and were probably unwilling to part with him. Yet the foundation was laid in that dispute for him to leave the one or the other society for the sake of peace; he therefore voluntarily made his election, or choice, to withdraw from the Presbyterians, as he had resolved to continue among the Methodists. Henceforward to the day of his death he was closely and firmly united with the Methodist Episcopal Church, in fellowship and communion.

Thus read the *Esquire* of Burlington, New Jersey in Sterling's obituary notice.

In *Memorials of Methodism in New Jersey*, Rev. John Atkinson wrote: "Probably no layman in the State ever did more to advance the cause of religion and Methodism than Mr. Sterling." He was not content with his labors for the Lord in the community where he lived and frequently travelled abroad to aid in the work of God. Mr. Sterling was described as a "true yoke fellow" of Benjamin Abbott, "and more than once they together shook the gates of hell."

Sterling was an untiring Christian laborer. He felt a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of all classes. It was never below his dignity to work in the kitchen with the servants, and he took the opportunity to point the servants to Christ, "who is no respecter of persons, who accepts all of every nation that fear Him and work righteousness."

He was especially devoted to the spiritual well-being of his own household, keeping a watchful eye over those in his employ as well as all members of

his family. Mr. Atkinson tells us, it was "a rule of his house. . . that all who were able should attend Church on the Sabbath. When thy hour of service arrived he was not only there himself, but it was his custom to rise and look over the congregation to see if all the members of his family, which included his clerks and servants as well as his own children, were present; and if not, when he returned home the absent ones were called to an account, and if they could render a satisfactory excuse it was well, but if not they receive from their parent or employer, as the case might be, such a reproof and exhortation as they were not likely soon to forget."

Mr. Sterling's first wife, Mary Shaw, died in 1785. He married a second time to Rebecca Budd. By the two marriages he had eighteen children. One son, John W. Sterling became a local preacher. It is recorded that he settled in Mount Holly in 1805. A year or two later Rev. Gamaliel Bailey, a local preacher, began to preach on Sabbath days. This was the beginning of the second rise of Methodism in Mount Holly. The first thrust had been in 1781 under Caleb Pedicord and Joseph Cromwell.

Under Rev. Bailey interest in forming a society was awakened and a class was formed, of which John W. Sterling was appointed leader. By 1809 the place of meeting was too small and efforts were made to provide a church. A board of trustees was formed consisting of William N. Shinn, John W. Sterling, Rev. Gamaliel Bailey, Samuel Risdon, David Moore, Curtis Dick and Samuel Forker. In 1810 a brick church was built, thirty-six feet square on Brainard Street in Mount Holly.

Another of James Sterling's children, Mrs. Rebecca B. Cowperthwaite was founder of the church school in Burlington, and became the wife of John D. Porter of the Newark Conference.

"Robert B. Yard of the Newark Conference is his great-grandson, a devoted minister of the Methodist Church," a fact recorded in *Memorials of Methodism in New Jersey* in 1860.

John Atkinson writes of Mr. Sterling as "a man of large benevolence, making his money as well as his time and energies subservient to the cause of religion. He contributed much during his life towards building Methodist houses of worship and his Christian hospitality was unbounded." Twenty-four Methodist preachers were on their way to General Conference, and stopped at the Burlington hotel. Upon hearing of this, Sterling immediately hastened to them, introduced himself and invited them to move and stay at his home. "They inquired if it would be convenient for him to entertain so many at once. He replied, Perfectly, and as many more if it were necessary." They gladly changed quarters for "the more genial accommodations of his attractive Methodist home." During Quarterly meeting it was not uncommon for a hundred persons to dine at his house, and he frequently lodged as many as fifty.

It was stated by Ezekiel Cooper in the obituary sketch of Sterling, "It is . . . believed that he has entertained in his house and contributed towards the support of more preachers of the gospel than any other man in the State, if not in the United States; and that he has done as much, if not more, in temporal supplies towards the support of religion, than any other man in the circle of our

knowledge. In this work of benevolence he had been zealously, diligently, and regularly employed for about half a century. His heart, his purse, and his house were open to entertain, not only his acquaintances, but to show hospitality to strangers; especially to those who came in the name of the Lord; and particularly to the ministers of Jesus Christ, of any denomination, who were always made welcome under his roof, where, with his family, they found a hospitable home and a comfortable resting place. The writer speaks in part from his own observation and knowledge, for more than thirty years.

"As a merchant and a man of business he was equaled by few. He conducted his affairs upon a large and extensive scale with great diligence, perseverance, punctuality, and integrity for more than fifty years. Probably no other man in the State, and but few in the United States, ever transacted so much business in the mercantile line as he did; not with more honor and honesty, and general satisfaction to those with whom he had dealings. He was particularly distinguished as an extraordinary and supereminent man of business for more than half a century.

"To take him all in all perhaps his like we shall seldom see again. Not that we presume to intimate that he had no faults, or was without the infirmities of human nature which are the common lot of man; but he was unquestionably an extraordinary man, in the several circles of his long, active, useful, and devoted life."

Mr. Sterling was the principal founder of the Library Company of Burlington, which is one of the earliest libraries in America, and one of the very early subscription libraries in America.

In the *New Jersey Conference Role of Members*, the Ezekiel Cooper Collection of Papers in Garrett Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, holds a letter from Cooper in Burlington, New Jersey dated January 7, 1818 which states in part, "James Sterling died yesterday morning, received two summons to death bed, left Philadelphia this morning at 11 o'clock; arrived here at 4 this afternoon; will preach funeral sermon tomorrow before a vast concourse of people of various denominations. Sterling was one of the oldest inhabitants of this city. . . perhaps no man in the State was better known and more esteemed. He left eleven children and grandchildren who represent two more."

John Atkinson concludes his memorial statement with, "He died firm in the faith of Christ, and in hope of a blissful and glorious immortality, on Tuesday, the sixth of January, 1818, in the 76th year of his age, after a long and painful illness 'which he bore with great patience and Christian resignation.' In his will he requested that on his grave stone should be inscribed the following lines: —

'Christ is to me as life on earth,
And death to me is gain,
Because I trust through him alone
Salvation to obtain."

Written by
Emily M. Johnson

THOMAS MORRELL

The Rev. Thomas Morrell was born in New York City, November 22, 1747. His mother was prominent in early Methodism, converted under the ministry of Philip Embury, and was a member of the first class meeting of Methodists in America, held in old John Street Church, New York. His father, Jonathan Morrell's conversion is said to have been about 1765. In 1772 the family moved to Elizabethtown, New Jersey, where his father opened a store, and young Thomas worked until 1775.

Thomas Morrell had a most distinguished service in the Revolutionary War. After the battle of Lexington, Massachusetts, a company of militia was formed in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, of which he was elected Captain. In 1776 he received a Captain's commission from the Continental Congress, then in session in Trenton. His orders were to enlist a company and report to General Washington in New York. On August 27th, in the battle of Long Island, he was severely wounded, being pierced by two balls — one just above his lungs and the other through his hand. After recovery, he was in the battles of Brandywine, Chadd's Ford, and Germantown (near Philadelphia), where he was again wounded. History records he was successively Captain and Major of the 4th New Jersey Brigade.

In 1785 Thomas Morrell was converted under the preaching of Rev. John Hagerty. Within three months he gave up his business and began preaching, and received his license to preach in June 1786. It was "about this time the first Society was formed in Elizabethtown, of which, he was probably one of the original members." By 1789 Mr. Morrell was ordained an elder.

General Conference began its sessions May 28th in New York, just four weeks after Washington had been inaugurated President of the United States of America, and Congress had not yet adjourned. Francis Asbury suggested to the Conference that the Church should present a patriotic and congratulatory address to President Washington. The suggestion was eagerly received and the following address was prepared and delivered:

ADDRESS OF THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

To the President of the United States.

Sir: — We, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, humbly beg leave, in the name of our society, collectively, in these United States, to express to you the warm feelings of our hearts, and our sincere congratulations on your appointment to the presidency of these states. We are conscious, from the signal proofs you have already given, that you are a friend of mankind; and under this established idea, place as full confidence in your wisdom and integrity for the preservation of those civil and religious liberties which have been trans-

mitted to us by the providence of God and the glorious Revolution, as we believe ought to be reposed in man.

We have received the most grateful satisfaction from the humble and entire dependence on the great Governor of the universe which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging Him the source of every blessing, and particularly of the most excellent constitution of these states, which is at present the admiration of the world, and may in future become its great exemplar for imitation; and hence we enjoy a holy expectation, that you will always prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion, the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence. And we promise you our fervent prayers to the throne of grace, that God Almighty may endue you with all the graces and gifts of His Holy Spirit, that He may enable you to fill up your important station to His glory, the good of His Church, the happiness and prosperity of the United States, and the welfare of mankind.

Signed in behalf of the Methodist Episcopal Church,

Thomas Coke,
Francis Asbury.

John Dickins and Thomas Morrell, both elders, were commissioned by the Conference to wait upon the President as to whether it would be agreeable to him to receive a deputation bearing the address. Although Bishop Coke was the senior Bishop he was not a citizen, so it was arranged that Asbury should read the address. President Washington read the following reply: "with fluency and animation:"

TO THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Gentlemen: — I return to you individually, and through you to your society, collectively, in the United States, my thanks for the demonstrations of affection, and the expressions of joy offered in their behalf, on my late appointment. It shall be my endeavor to manifest the purity of my inclinations for promoting the happiness of mankind, as well as the sincerity of my desires to contribute whatever may be in my power toward the civil and religious liberties of the American people. In pursuing this line of conduct, I hope, by the assistance of divine Providence, not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me.

It always affords me satisfaction when I find a concurrence of sentiment and practice between all conscientious men, in acknowledgments of homage to the great Governor of the

universe, and in professions of support to a just civil government. After mentioning that I trust the people of every denomination, who demean themselves as good citizens, will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion, I must assure you in particular, that I take in the kindest part the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me, and that I likewise implore the divine benediction on yourselves and your religious community.

George Washington

Both addresses were published on the following Saturday in a New York paper, the "Gazette of the United States," which drew considerable criticism of Bishop Coke as a British subject. Dr. Coke had already sailed on the fifth of June on Board the good ship "Union," bound for Liverpool. Thomas Morrell undertook, with diplomacy, his defense.

This capable man of God served the leading churches of the Methodist Episcopal Church in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston and elsewhere. In 1806 he located, but continued preaching on a circuit in Union, Essex and Morris Counties.

Mr. Morrell became the second charter member of the Conference. He entered the full connection in 1788, located in 1806 and became supernumerary in 1825.



In 1802 Major Morrell married Lydia Frazer of Westfield, New Jersey. They had three children, one of whom was Francis A. Morrell, who became a very successful preacher in the Methodist Church. Reflecting back on his early childhood, we might say symbolically that Bishop Asbury ordained the son of Thomas Morrell. "When Bishop Asbury visited his father Thomas Morrell he took Francis on his knee and laid his hand in blessing on his head."

January 1, 1838, Thomas Morrell entered in his journal, "Through the tender mercy of God I have lived to see the beginning of another year, being now ninety years, one month and nine days old, a longer period than any of our family have lived. I have many things to be thankful for my life being prolonged to so advanced an age, having the faculties of my mind in perfect exercise, my health tolerably good. . . my wife in health, my children all religious and in

health, my son successful as a preacher, my soul devoted to God, and everything in plenty of temporal thing. Would to God I was more thankful, more holy, more heavenly-minded. This morning I have devoted my soul and body to God."

His son tells us "His favorite themes in preaching were the universality of the atonement, justification by faith, and especially the doctrine of entire sanctification. . . I seldom heard him preach, but the tears flowed from his eyes, evincing the deep earnestness of his soul. His absorbing aim was to lead the soul to Christ and heaven." Mr. Morrell strictly observed a vow he had recorded years before, "never to omit private prayer three times a day." Dr. Murray records of this practice and of Morrell's life, "He possessed a rich Christian experience, he was a good man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

Though suffering was great, in his last hour he endeavored to sing with his family the 'Christian's Home,' and said, 'I shall soon be there,' and "when asked if death was a terror to him, he replied in the negative, and added, 'I have gotten the victory.' He exclaimed, — 'How good to feel a Saviour's love amid so much suffering.'" His last words were, 'All is well,' and then without a struggle or a sigh, sweetly fell asleep in Jesus. . . Thus triumphantly ended an eventful and noble career of Thomas Morrell on August 9th, 1838.

Written by
Emily M. Johnson

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Our society is doing many interesting things. Many of these things are tied in with the Bicentennial Years. This is a good time to invite others to become members of the society. You and your friends may become a member of the Historical Society of the Southern New Jersey Annual Conference by the payment of \$2.00 annual dues. Please send them to our Financial Secretary, Rev. James E. Thompson, 20 Union Street, Manahawkin, New Jersey 08058. Also available is the Benjamin Abbott Life Membership of \$50.00. Individuals or churches are invited to become Life Members of the Society.

Be a part of the Bicentennial Celebration of our nation by doing some of the following suggestions:

1. Organize a local church committee on Records and History and elect a Local Church Historian if you have not already done so.
2. Write and publish the history of the local church.
3. Observe Heritage Sunday (Nearest Sunday to May 24).
4. Note that July 4, 1976 will be a Sunday. Make this an important highlight.
5. Recognize long-time members.
6. Develop an oral history program to gather the oral tradition (good youth project to visit old-timers and write down their reminiscences).
7. Make a listing of all of the church records and file a copy with the Commission on Archives and History of the Conferences.

If you would wish more suggestions or help with these suggestions contact Rev. Robert Steelman, 207 Locust St., West Long Branch 07764, Rev. Elwood Perkins 2517 Sherman Avenue, Pennsauken, New Jersey 08109, or Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, 216 Engleside Avenue, Beach Haven, New Jersey 08008.

Visit your library room at the Pennington School Library. Make use of the visual aids in our Conference Office Building. We have some very excellent ones to help you understand Methodism. Use them for your membership classes.

May this be an excellent year in our churches as we receive inspiration from our fine heritage.

Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
Archivist-Custodian